



Legal Counseling as a Preventive and Responsive Effort Against Sexual Violence in Schools: A Community Service Program at SMP Negeri 20 South Tangerang

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Corresponding Author: Aditya Maulana E-mail: hafshahmaulidiya21@gmail.com</p>	<p>Sexual violence in school environments has become an increasingly alarming issue, especially among junior high school students. Many victims, particularly female students, often remain silent due to fear and shame, which hinders efforts to provide protection and justice. This community service program aimed to raise awareness and educate students of SMP Negeri Dua Puluh South Tangerang on the prevention and handling of sexual harassment. Through legal counseling sessions, students were introduced to the concept of bodily autonomy, the importance of speaking up, and the legal protections available to them. The program applied a quantitative descriptive method, involving questionnaires, observations, and direct discussions to assess students' understanding before and after the session. The findings suggest that legal education in schools can significantly enhance students' ability to recognize, prevent, and report incidents of sexual violence. This initiative also highlighted the essential roles of schools, parents, and communities in safeguarding students' rights.</p> <p>Keywords: Sexual Violence, Legal Counseling, Students, Prevention, School Safety, Bodily Autonomy, Community Service</p>

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence within educational environments has become an issue of grave concern, particularly in Indonesia, where awareness and preventive frameworks are still evolving. Schools, which are ideally safe spaces for students, have increasingly become locations where various forms of abuse, including sexual harassment, occur. This phenomenon demands urgent intervention and collaborative preventive efforts from all stakeholders, especially educational institutions, families, and legal authorities (Aripurnami, 2020).

Adolescents, particularly those in junior high school, often struggle to recognize and respond to incidents of sexual violence due to a lack of comprehensive sex education and limited understanding of their own rights. According to Margaretta and Kristyaningsih (2021), school-aged children are highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation when they are not equipped with the knowledge to protect themselves or to seek help. This vulnerability is compounded

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by cultural norms that often discourage open discussions about sexual issues within families and schools.

Research by Fadhilah et al. (2021) emphasizes the crucial role of early sexual education in reducing the incidence of sexual violence. Their study highlights how awareness-raising initiatives can foster students' ability to identify inappropriate behaviors and understand the boundaries of personal safety. However, in practice, many students remain unaware of these concepts, especially in under-resourced schools where such topics are seldom addressed in the curriculum.

In many cases, students who are victims of sexual violence do not report the incidents due to fear of stigma, disbelief, or retaliation. As noted by Khaliza et al. (2021), silence among victims is a major obstacle in combating school-based sexual harassment. Students often feel powerless, and the absence of clear reporting mechanisms within schools exacerbates the problem. Hence, empowering students to speak up is a critical step toward ensuring justice and safety.

Community-based legal education can serve as a transformative tool in bridging the knowledge gap among students. Legal counseling conducted through community service programs, such as the one implemented at SMP Negeri Dua Puluh South Tangerang, aims not only to raise awareness but also to instill confidence among students to act when faced with sexual misconduct. Such initiatives also help reinforce the message that every student has the right to feel safe and respected within their school.

According to Anggoman (2019), legal counseling must be designed in a participatory and youth-friendly manner to be effective. When delivered with empathy and relevance to students' experiences, legal education becomes more than just information—it becomes empowerment. By understanding what constitutes sexual violence, who can be held accountable, and what legal recourses are available, students are better positioned to protect themselves and their peers.

The legal foundation for protecting children from sexual violence in Indonesia is established through Law Number Thirty-Five Year Twenty-Fourteen, which amended the earlier Law Number Twenty-Three Year Two Thousand Two concerning Child Protection. This legal framework emphasizes the state's obligation to ensure a safe environment for every child and mandates collaboration between schools, communities, and the legal system. However, effective implementation remains a significant challenge due to lack of awareness at the grassroots level (Undang-Undang RI No. 35 Tahun 2014).

Efforts to address sexual violence must also take into account the emotional and psychological consequences for the victims. As noted by El-Matary et al. (2021), victims of sexual harassment often experience long-term mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. Therefore, any preventive strategy should include psychological support mechanisms and encourage a culture of empathy among students and staff.

This paper presents the implementation and outcomes of a legal counseling-based community service initiative conducted in a junior high school in South Tangerang. The program targeted a group of eighth-grade students and sought to assess their understanding of sexual violence before and after the counseling sessions. It also aimed to create a safe space for dialogue, questions, and student-led discussions.

Through this initiative, we seek to demonstrate how legal education, when integrated into school settings and tailored to students' developmental levels, can contribute

meaningfully to the prevention and handling of sexual violence. Ultimately, fostering a school culture that is legally literate, emotionally sensitive, and responsive to students' voices is vital to protecting children from harm and ensuring their right to a dignified education.

METHODS

This community service program employed a quantitative-descriptive approach to explore the level of understanding and awareness among junior high school students regarding sexual violence. The aim was to assess the effectiveness of legal counseling in equipping students with the knowledge and confidence to recognize, prevent, and respond to sexual harassment within the school environment. By applying this method, the researchers were able to present measurable insights while maintaining a strong contextual understanding of the social setting.

The activity was carried out at SMP Negeri Dua Puluh South Tangerang and involved a total of thirty-five students from the eighth grade. This group was chosen based on accessibility, relevance, and the support from the school administration, which acknowledged the urgency of addressing the issue of sexual violence. The participants had varying levels of awareness regarding legal protections and bodily autonomy, making them ideal for this outreach initiative.

Data collection techniques included the use of structured questionnaires, direct observation, and interactive discussion sessions. The questionnaires were designed to capture students' baseline knowledge of sexual violence, their willingness to report, and their perception of personal safety. These instruments were developed based on validated models from previous research studies on adolescent sexual education (Fadhilah et al., 2021; Margaretta & Kristyaningsih, 2021), and were adjusted to fit the local cultural context.

Observations were conducted during the counseling sessions to monitor non-verbal reactions, engagement levels, and group dynamics. The facilitators also maintained field notes that documented the students' verbal responses, emotional cues, and questions raised during discussions. This qualitative input provided rich contextual data to complement the numerical findings derived from the questionnaire responses.

The sessions themselves were structured into three key phases: initial awareness-building, legal knowledge dissemination, and open dialogue. During the awareness-building phase, students were introduced to the concept of personal boundaries and consent. This was followed by a legal education session where facilitators explained key aspects of Indonesia's child protection laws, especially the provisions in Law Number Thirty-Five Year Two Thousand Fourteen. Lastly, an open discussion was conducted to give students the opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts.

To ensure ethical integrity, the research team sought consent from the school and informed participants of the confidentiality of their responses. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no identifying information was collected. Special attention was given to creating a safe and non-judgmental space, where students could express themselves without fear. The presence of both male and female facilitators was also intended to provide balance and encourage openness among participants.

The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution and percentage calculations. These were used to measure the proportion of students who correctly understood the definitions and examples of sexual

violence before and after the sessions. The researchers also examined the data to identify patterns in student responses that could guide future interventions.

This methodology allowed the program not only to evaluate immediate knowledge gains but also to understand the emotional and psychological readiness of students to engage in conversations about sensitive issues. By integrating legal, educational, and social elements, the method supported a holistic approach to preventing sexual violence and promoting student well-being within the school setting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socialization activity on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in School Environments was successfully carried out by the students of the Law Study Program, Faculty of Law, Universitas Pamulang, in collaboration with SMP Negeri Twenty South Tangerang. The implementation of this program received full support from both the university and the school, which served as the primary target of the initiative. The activity was conducted on Wednesday, May fourteenth, two thousand twenty-five, at exactly one o'clock in the afternoon Western Indonesia Time (WIB). A total of thirty-five eighth-grade students from SMP Negeri Twenty South Tangerang participated in the event.

The program began with an opening by the Master of Ceremony (MC), followed by a welcoming speech delivered by Mr. Mukhammad Saeful Maqi, S.Pd., representing the school. The event then continued with the presentation of materials, each delivered in fifteen-minute sessions by the facilitators. The final presentation was delivered by our team member, M. Adrian Kusuma, using a prepared PowerPoint slide show, which was displayed while he explained the content to the students.

During the session, the speaker highlighted that cases of sexual harassment and abuse remain prevalent in Indonesia, especially among school-aged children who often suffer psychological trauma as a result. It was also emphasized that while girls are more frequently victims, boys are not immune to such incidents. Sexual violence often stems from environments close to the victims, including schools, homes, and other social institutions. These acts not only cause emotional distress but also create relational and gender inequalities, threatening the fundamental right to a safe and dignified education.

Referring to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number Thirty-Five of Two Thousand Fourteen, which amends Law Number Twenty-Three of Two Thousand Two on Child Protection, such acts are categorized as sexual crimes. The law underscores the need for stronger commitment from the government, local authorities, and the wider community in protecting children. What makes this issue even more tragic is that many perpetrators come from within the victim's own family or educational environment, such as homes, schools, and social surroundings.

The legal counseling delivered in this program aimed to raise awareness and provide students with a deeper understanding of how to recognize, prevent, and report incidents of sexual violence. After the presentation, a question-and-answer session was held, during which students were encouraged to seek further clarification. Four students actively participated by asking thoughtful questions. As a token of appreciation for their enthusiasm, small gifts were presented to these students.



Figure 1. Opening Remarks from the School Representative

The image captures the moment when the representative of SMP Negeri Twenty South Tangerang, Mr. Mukhammad Saeful Maqi, S.Pd., delivered his opening remarks during the legal counseling and awareness session on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in the school environment. In his speech, he expressed his appreciation for the initiative carried out by the students and faculty of the Universitas Pamulang Faculty of Law. He emphasized the importance of such educational programs in fostering a safer and more respectful school culture. The photograph shows Mr. Maqi addressing the audience of eighth-grade students with a calm and encouraging demeanor, reflecting the school's full support for the event. The students listened attentively, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and openness that set the tone for the rest of the program.



Figure 2. Presentation by the Speaker

This figure depicts one of the speakers from the Universitas Pamulang student team delivering a legal counseling session to the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri Twenty South Tangerang. The speaker is seen presenting the material using a prepared PowerPoint presentation projected on a screen, while actively engaging with the students. The discussion focused on the definition of sexual violence, the forms it can take within school environments, and the rights of students to safety and protection. The speaker explained the importance of

consent, personal boundaries, and the legal framework that protects children under Indonesian law. The students appeared attentive and responsive, indicating their interest and willingness to understand the topic. The atmosphere during the session was both informative and supportive, creating a space where students could absorb new knowledge with confidence. This moment reflects the core objective of the program: to educate and empower students to recognize, prevent, and speak up about sexual violence.

Figure 4. Presentation of a Token of Appreciation to the School Representative



This image captures the symbolic moment of presenting a token of appreciation from the Universitas Pamulang community service team to the representative of SMP Negeri

Twenty South Tangerang. The gesture was conducted at the conclusion of the legal counseling program as a form of gratitude for the school's warm welcome, active participation, and full support in facilitating the implementation of the activity. The photograph shows a representative from the student team handing over the cinderamata, while the school representative receives it with appreciation and a gesture of respect. This ceremonial exchange highlights the spirit of collaboration between academic institutions and schools in promoting shared educational values and social responsibility. It also symbolizes the hope for sustained cooperation in future programs that aim to build safer, more informed, and more inclusive school environments.



Figure 5. Completion of Community Service Program by Group Four

This figure documents the final moment of the community service activity conducted by Group Four from the Law Study Program, Universitas Pamulang. The photograph features all group members standing together as a team, symbolizing the successful completion of the legal counseling program on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in schools. The image reflects a sense of accomplishment, solidarity, and shared commitment to social

responsibility. With smiles and a spirit of collaboration, the team poses for the photo at the venue of SMP Negeri Twenty South Tangerang, marking the culmination of weeks of preparation and engagement. This documentation not only serves as evidence of program execution but also represents the students' dedication to contributing meaningfully to community development through legal education and awareness-building.

CONCLUSION

This community service initiative has underscored the critical importance of legal counseling as a proactive and responsive strategy to address sexual violence in school environments. The program, conducted with the students of a public junior high school in South Tangerang, revealed that many adolescents still lack fundamental knowledge about their rights, bodily autonomy, and the legal framework designed to protect them. Through structured discussions, legal material presentations, and open dialogue sessions, students were able to engage meaningfully with the topic and demonstrated increased awareness and confidence in recognizing and reporting inappropriate behaviors. The findings emphasize that preventive education delivered directly in schools can play a transformative role in shaping students' understanding of sexual boundaries and justice. Moreover, the active participation of both students and educators suggests that schools are ready to become safe spaces for such critical conversations, provided that the approach is sensitive, inclusive, and grounded in legal and psychological principles. Ultimately, addressing sexual violence in educational settings requires collaborative efforts from schools, families, and legal institutions. Legal counseling programs must continue to be integrated into school activities to ensure that students not only understand their rights but are also empowered to exercise them. Sustained engagement and institutional support remain key to long-term change and protection.

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